

**Greater Tompkins County Municipal Health Insurance Consortium
Strategic Planning Committee
MINUTES
March 16, 2012 – 4 p.m.
Scott Heyman Conference Room**

Present:

Don Barber, Chair, Greater Tompkins County Municipal Health Insurance Consortium
Steve Locey, Locey and Cahill and Consultant to the Greater Tompkins County Municipal Health Insurance Consortium
Betty Falcao, Director, Health Planning Council
Laura Shawley, GTCMIC Board of Directors, Town of Danby
Travis Turner, Executive Director, Physicians Hospital Organization
Paul Bursic, Cornell University Human Resources
Joe Mareane, Tompkins County Administrator
Beth McKinney, Cornell Wellness Program
Jackie Kippola, Tompkins County Administration
Ken Harris, Administrator, Guthrie Clinic, Hanshaw Road
Steve Thayer, City of Ithaca Controller
Mark Coldren, Associate Vice President for Human Resources, Ithaca College
Judy Drake, GTCMHIC Board of Directors, Town of Ithaca

Call to Order

Mr. Barber called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

Meeting Schedule

Mr. Barber suggested scheduling a regular meeting date for this Committee. Following suggestions by those present, it was the consensus to meet bi-monthly on the 4th Tuesday at 4 p.m. Following an e-mail being sent to all participants, the time was changed to noon.

The meeting dates for the remainder of the year will be:

May 22
July 24
September 25
November 27

Mr. Barber read the following from an article entitled “Who Owns My Health” sent by Ms. Karns:

“Seems like an odd question – “who owns my health?” But, when you look around, maybe it’s a great questions. Just watching the way most people treat themselves is overpowering evidence that, as a culture, we believe someone else is responsible for our health. We eat the wrong food. We don’t exercise. We neglect rest and sleep. We work too hard, worry too much and generally abuse ourselves in our own personal ways.

“What’s the point? In our country today, many of us believe that someone else, some other person or organization owns and is managing our health, not us.

“So who is responsible for our health? Is it the government, or maybe my insurer or health plan? My doctor? The drug companies? The fast food industry?

Our individual and collective behaviors point to a core belief that “My health is not my own,” and the people and organizations providing services in the health care, food, drug, and other industries are responsible for our health.

“Simple logic dispels this myth about owning our own health. Just stop and think about it for a moment.”

Mr. Barber said the labor representatives, through the Joint Committee on Plan Structure and Design, have been discussing how there needs to be more dialogue about ways in which employees can play a role in managing health care costs.

Presentation of Information by Beth McKinney, Cornell Wellness Program

Ms. McKinney said on one hand the responsibility to one's health and behaviors are under their own control. On the other hand, there are many organizations that control behaviors and she provided an example of smoking bans in public places. She said there are decisions employers need to make as to where they want to “draw the line” but noted there is no set place where a line exists. She said Cornell has offered health behavior assessments to its employees and some employees did not want to do this because they felt Cornell did not have a right to their personal health information. There are laws that ensure employers cannot have access to this information and Mr. Bursic has worked on having a third party gather information instead of Cornell. Ms. McKinney said an employer should understand what compelling reasons there are for an employer to get involved in someone's personal choices.

The four main behaviors employers want to change relate to: nutrition and weight, stress level, smoking cessation, and physical activity. Other behaviors areas that employers have looked at include: alcohol abuse, other substance abuse, and depression. The big reasons why an employer would do this are: 1) to save money in health care and make employees more healthy; and 2) make the organization a great employer and make employees feel like the employer cares enough about them to allow them to do things such as exercise during the workday or attend training sessions for the purpose of making them healthier.

Mr. Bursic spoke of a group that has been extraordinarily successful over the last few weeks at Cornell in creating teams to participate in a spring wellness competition. There are 59 teams with over 750 participants. Ms. McKineey said employees tend to enjoy social and competition-related wellness opportunities that can be taken advantage of at the workplace during work time.

Mr. Locey asked if Cornell has been able to analyze the productivity of employees who have participated in these types of activities against a similar time period when a program was not offered. Ms. McKinney said they have not done productivity studies but they have done employee surveys, they have several testimonials, and she believes they are effective.

Ms. McKinney said another area where savings can be achieved is in providing self-care information to avoid unnecessary emergency room visits. She clarified that they are not expecting everyone to be physically active but they want people to have an opportunity to be more active if they want to be. The more varieties of opportunities that can be offered there will be more employees who participate in them. She also said if employees can come up with the ideas, there will be more excitement about taking advantage of them. Mr. Turner agreed and said it has to be a collaborative effort with employees on both the vision and message. He said someone can appear healthy but can be very unhealthy as a result of their stress level; stress is something that can be measured and there are measurement tools that exist.

Mr. Turner said effective May 31, 2012 Cayuga Medical Center will be a smoke free campus. As part of the Hospital's campaign, every employee will be given a kit that contains items to encourage smokers to discontinue tobacco use.

Ms. McKinney said there is a lot of information on wellness that is available online and free. She and Ms. Falcao would also be willing to provide assistance developing sample policies that employers could use in the workplace that would promote health.

Ms. Falcao said one area she thinks is important is to have employees know what is covered under their health plan and what wellness opportunities currently exist.

Ms. Kippola said the County's Wellness is not active at this time; however, employees have continued to receive reimbursement for health club memberships. She also spoke of a program that is available through Excellus that provides a Visa gift card in the amount of up to \$500 that rewards for healthy behaviors.

Presentation of Information by Betty Falcao, Health Planning Council

Ms. Falcao provided everyone with a pedometer; Mr. Locey said Excellus used to provide a pedometer with their Step Up Program at no cost and will check to see if they are still available. She distributed information on sustainable worksite practices containing information on:

Environment Strategies

1. Adopting policies to increase access to physical activity;
2. Adopting comprehensive food purchasing policies to ensure cafeteria meals, refreshments, and vending machines include healthy sustainable choices;
3. Establish on-site sale of produce, such as farmers markets or community supported agriculture;
4. Promote stair use by increasing access to clean, safe stairwells; and
5. Adopt flex-time policies that allow employees to fit physical activity into workdays

Activity-oriented Strategies:

1. Increase use of voluntary biometric testing with appropriate referral to the primary health care provider;
2. Facilitate weight management programs at worksite;
3. Facilitate smoking cessation programs at the worksite;
4. Increase workplace lactation support using the Business Case for Breastfeeding toolkit;
5. Increase use of incentives and supports for alternative forms of transportation to and from work, such as walking, biking, or taking public transportation; and
6. Modify health plan benefit design so preventive health services are part of health insurance coverage

Results-oriented Strategies:

1. Increase use of incentives for employee participation in Health Risk Assessments;
2. Increase use of telephone, web-based or in-person health coaching; and
3. Increase use of incentives for completion of steps for reducing risk behaviors or for achieving certain standards

Ms. McKinney said it is important to first determine as an employer what the organization wants for its employees. Ms. Falcao said she doesn't see any of this as pressuring employees to do something but instead, this is providing more opportunities to employees for better health.

Mr. Barber said wellness was discussed at the last meeting of the Joint Committee on Plan Structure and Design. The Committee which is made up of both labor and management representatives, concluded with everyone believing it is in everyone's best interest to work together and advocate for wellness programs. Ms. Kippola said in the past the County has offered a flu clinic and it was very successful.

Ms. Falcao also distributed guidelines for healthy meetings, food suggestions for breaks, and stretching exercises that can be performed during work. Ms. McKinney said an ergonomic assessment is another good idea. Ms. Kippola will share the name of an individual who will perform these assessments free of charge.

There was a discussion of changing behaviors and it was stated that regardless of what efforts are made there will be people who choose not to take advantage of opportunities to improve their own health. With regard to smoking, Ms. Falcao said there are ways to encourage smoking cessation such as having policies that prohibit smoking at the workplace and increased taxes.

Mr. Barber asked Mr. Coldren, who in attendance for the first time, to comment on discussion that has taken place. Mr. Coldren said there are many resources available. He stressed the importance of thinking about this comprehensively and thinks this is broader than health and wellness and has to be looked at as a worklife umbrella. He also thinks its alright to lay out the expectation to employees when they are hired that they are to be healthy. He said in order to do this a supervisor has to care about a person and know about what challenges they hold. Mr. Coldren spoke of the importance to educate supervisors and manager and that this is value-based and has to be something the organization believes in.

Ms. Falcao asked what would be helpful to the Consortium in terms of the health plan. Mr. Barber said the idea is to have this become a discussion topic and has already been introduced at both the Board of Directors level and at the Joint Committee. Health care costs are out of control and are not sustainable. The initiatives that are taking place at Guthrie, CAP, and at Cornell are all the right things but there needs to be more of it. He said this is a great venue to have these discussions and will be taking information and ideas back to the groups in the Consortium. Ms. Shawley said the Town of Danby is a small municipality that has only ten employees. She is appreciative of the information and ideas she has heard so far because she has heard employees comment on concerns they have for their health and would like to begin offering opportunities that could help them.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Michelle Pottorff, Administrative Clerk

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